

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 EB-03 MC-01 IO-03 IGA-01 /045 W

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R 191841Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6191

INFO USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1453

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MASS, GT, US

SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE PURCHASE OF C-47'S

1. IN SEPTEL EMBASSY AND MILGP REQUEST INCREASE IN APPROVED US FORCE OBJECTIVE FOR GUATEMALA TO 21 C-47 AIRCRAFT IN ORDER PERMIT GOG TO PURCHASE 11 USED C-47'S FROM USAF. WE FIRST OFFICIALLY HEARD OF GOG DESIRE TO PURCHASE ENTIRE 11 (INSTEAD OF FOUR PREVIOUSLY PLANNED) WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER CALLED IN AMBASSADOR MARCH 13 TO MEET WITH HIM AND MOD RUBIO. THE TWO MINISTERS HAD RECEIVED REPORT FROM THEIR MILITARY ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON OF A TURNDOWN BY "PENTAGON" OF GUATEMALAN REQUEST AND THEY ASKED AMBASSADOR TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO OBTAIN APPROVAL.

2. RUBIO TOLD AMBASSADOR AT LEAST 20 C-47'S WERE NECESSARY IN ORDER MOVE ENTIRE PARACHUTE BATTALION AT ONE TIME AND TO GIVE ALL MEMBERS OF BATTALION PARACHUTE TRAINING AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH. MOST IMPORTANT USE OF PLANES, HOWEVER, WOULD BE FOR COMMERCIAL CARGO CARRYING INSIDE GUATEMALA, NEED FOR WHICH IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE AS OIL COMPANIES BEGIN TO INVEST IN PETEN. OIL COMPANIES (AND PERHAPS OTHER COMPANIES INVOLVED IN OTHER CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY) WOULD BE REQUIRED TO FLY THEIR SUPPLIES IN ON GAF PLANES, AS RUBIO UNDERSTOOD WAS ALSO THE CASE IN ECUADOR AND COLOMBIA.

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3. AMBASSADOR TOOK OPPORTUNITY TO SEEK ASSURANCES CONCERNING

GUATEMALAN INTENSIONS WITH REGARD TO BELIZE AND SPECIFICALLY ASSURANCES CONCERNING NON-USE OF THESE PLANES IN PARACHUTE DROP ON BELIZE. GEN. RUBIO SAID HE COULD TELL US GUATEMALA IS NOT SEEKING PLANES IN CONNECTION WITH BELIZE.

4. AMBASSADOR SAID HE WOULD INFORM WASHINGTON THAT THE MINISTERS HAD ASSURED HIM INFORMALLY THAT THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN GUATEMALAN DESIRE TO ACQUIRE ADDITIONAL USED C-47'S AND ANY POSSIBLE MILITARY ADVENTURE IN BELIZE, AND THAT IT WAS NOT GUATEMALA'S INTENTION TO USE C-47'S IN ANY WAY TO CAUSE EMBARRASSMENT TO U.S. FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTED THAT MILITARY ACTION WAS NOT SOLUTION TO BELIZE PROBLEM. IT WOULD ONLY CAUSE GREATER PROBLEMS. DETAILED MEMCON POUCHED.

5. AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF OUR INTERESTS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GUATEMALA AND RISKS INVOLVED, AMBASSADOR RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF GUATEMALAN REQUEST.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PROCUREMENT, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, MILITARY TRAINING, FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975GUATEM01453
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750097-0228
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750337/aaaabhfy.tel
Line Count: 79
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 SEP 2003 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE PURCHASE OF C-47'S
TAGS: MASS, GT, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006